

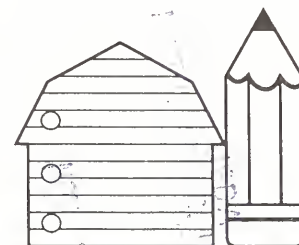
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Ag in the Classroom

Notes

United States
Department of
Agriculture



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World Hunger and Public Policy Issues Discussed at Conference

One of the most challenging presentations at the recent Ag in the Classroom national conference dealt with issues relating to world hunger. J.R. "Deep" Ford, a professor at the University of Vermont, shared his thoughts on this major world concern—and on how classroom teachers can make their students more aware of the problem.

Ford noted that the theme of the conference, "Connections," is "central to my own work. . . . [Among these are] connections related to food and agricultural production, food aid, food and agricultural imports and exports."

The real world hunger problem, Ford observed, is not "what you see on the six o'clock news." In fact, these temporary food shortages account for only 10 percent of the deaths from hunger-based illnesses.

"Chronic food insecurity," on the other hand, "is the killer," Ford continued. This type of hunger accounts for 15 million deaths annually—35,000 each day.

"While this is taking place," he added, "we have a world that produces enough food to feed everyone . . . about five pounds of food per day, more than three times the amount needed to support life."

Public policy has a significant impact on chronic food insecurity. "For instance, when foreign direct investment is promoted in a particular country, that often takes land away from domestic producers," he said.

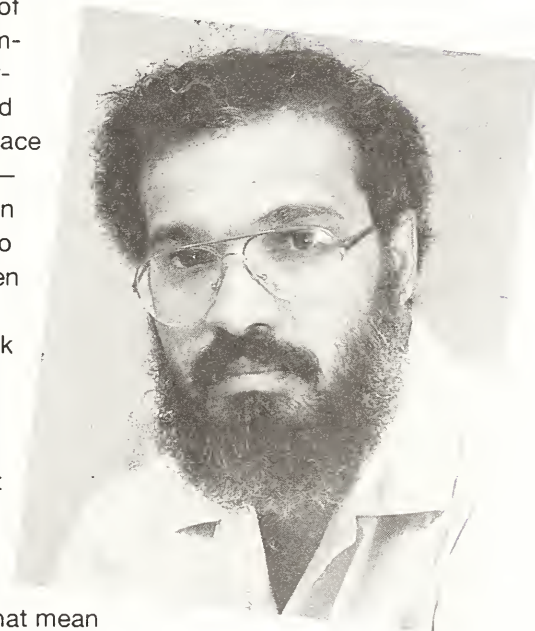
Even humanitarian food assistance can harm local agricultural production. Cheaper imported food competes with local producers, forcing them

to migrate to cities and become city-dwellers, or change their domestic production to export crops. When the food aid is later unavailable, the country no longer has the ability to feed its people due to the displacement of its agricultural sector.

Ford offered one example of how teachers could use a hamburger to help students understand the global nature of food production today. "You can trace the origins of these products—historically, wheat originated in the Near East." You could also point out to students that when there is a disease in today's crops, scientists often go back to the place of origin to find a cure.

"Or," he says, "you could talk about a candy bar." What are the implications of a new technology that "suggests that cocoa may soon be grown in a vat? What might that mean for food availability in Ghana or Grenada, where cocoa is grown today? What might that mean for immigration to the United States?"

Ford concluded by noting the power that teachers have for the future: "If you want to promote development for five years, write a book. If you want to promote development for 20 years, plant a tree. If you want to promote development forever, educate the children."



*University of Vermont
professor J.R. "Deep"*

Ford outlined the connections between public policy and world hunger.

Editor's Note

Last spring a major corporation decided to involve students in their community programs. Giving them a set amount to distribute to charities, management then oversaw the distribution. Not content to simply follow the company's history of gift-giving, the students set aside a portion as seed money to organize a fundraiser. Their resourcefulness and entrepreneurial spirit allowed them to give more money to charities.

The lesson they teach all of us is a valuable one. In whatever we do, there are always alternatives to explore; a challenge to go beyond what's expected of us; to truly make a difference.

This outlook runs strong with everyone involved with AITC, and has made the program flourish. Sharing existing projects with fellow attendees was a key part of the recent national conference. Exciting to see were the many new ideas coming forth from newcomers and "old-timers" alike, and the enthusiasm with which the participants went home, ready to tackle a new project, achieving growth in their program. This issue highlights just a few of these success stories bringing agriculture education to our youth. — Laurie Green

[NOTE: Laurie Green is serving as Acting Director of the AITC until a permanent appointment is made. Ms. Green is the Assistant to the Secretary of Agriculture for Maryland, where she has worked with the state's ag education program for the last four years.]

New Book Lets You Test Your AG IQ

What's your agricultural IQ? See how many of these questions you can answer correctly:

1. What is the number one agricultural export in the United States?
 - a. beef
 - b. potatoes
 - c. corn
 - d. roses
2. What is the world's most widely eaten meat?
 - a. pork
 - b. beef
 - c. chicken
 - d. turkey
3. How many one-pound loaves of bread can be produced from one acre of wheat?
 - a. 500
 - b. 2,000
 - c. 15,000
 - d. 7,000
4. Who was the first American farmer to eat ice cream?
 - a. George Washington
 - b. John Adams
 - c. Thomas Jefferson
 - d. James Madison
5. What's America's favorite fresh fruit?
 - a. bananas
 - b. apples
 - c. oranges
 - d. strawberries



These and hundreds of other questions are included in *Agriculture 101: Fun Facts To Know and Tell*, a publication of the Department of Agricultural Education of Ohio State University. The publication is designed to increase the public's awareness of the complexity of agriculture—from basic facts through production, processing, and distribution. The booklet, developed by students in an Agricultural Communication class at Ohio State, uses a quiz format "because it's fun, stimulates curiosity, and provides a quick way to share information," according to the book's foreword.

The questions in the booklet cover all facets of agriculture and are at varying levels of difficulty. It would be a valuable resource for teachers—and a fun way for students to learn more about America's number one industry.

Copies of *Agriculture 101* are available for \$5. Contact Curtis E. Paulson, Agricultural Communication Coordinator, 204 Agricultural Administration, 2120 Fyffe Road, Columbus, OH 43210 or call 614-262-0450.

Correct answers: 1. c; 2. a; 3. b; 4. a; 5. b.

Spotlight

First Graders' Tomato Crop Yields Knowledge About Economics

Can first graders understand basic economics? They can if their teacher is Kay Hollifield, who combined her interest in agriculture and economics for a unit her students will never forget.

"I wanted to give students a concrete idea of how our economic system works," says Hollifield, a teacher at County Line Elementary School in Barrow County, Georgia. "I decided that a unit on planting would also allow me to integrate math, science, and social studies." With her first graders, Hollifield set up a small business growing and selling tomato plants.

Of course, the students needed capital to finance their business venture. Hollifield worked with her school's business partner, Bank South. A loan officer visited her first grade classroom and had all the students fill out loan applications. It took a very long time. "The hardest thing was getting the first graders to write on the lines," Hollifield said. After reviewing their credit worthiness, the loan officer approved a loan for \$30.

The students used the money to purchase seeds and the other materials they would need. Hollifield used their experiences to encourage them to think creatively about such important economics concepts as scarcity and interdependence. She asked probing questions: "What happens to a tomato farmer if there isn't enough rain to produce a crop? How does that affect consumers? How many different people are involved in bringing a tomato from field to market?"

In fact, Hollifield's lessons on scarcity proved to be a preview of what actually happened in her class. "One flat of tomato plants never grew more than 1" high," she reported. "We never could figure out exactly what happened."

The partial crop failure caused the students to reevaluate how they would use the profits from their business venture. "In the beginning, they had grand plans," Hollifield said. "But they had to scale them back when the plants didn't grow."

Students had to scale back a second time to deal with another economic reality—you can't spend money on things you want if you have to

spend it on things you need. Hollifield's classroom had an electric pencil sharpener. The rule was that students were to use it only under the teacher's watchful eye. One day, however, Mrs. Hollifield went to a conference.

"First graders being first graders told the substitute that they were always allowed to use the pencil sharpener by themselves," she said. When the motor burned up, the students had another important obligation to meet.

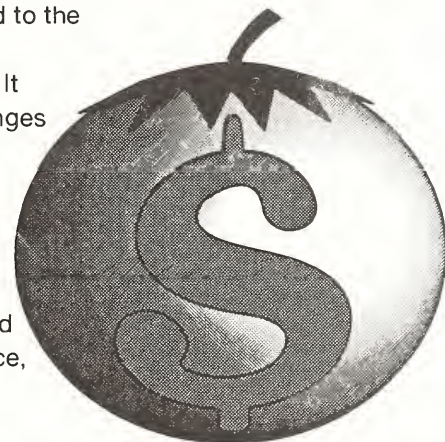
Finally the crop came up. Students took orders for their plants and delivered them to satisfied customers (mostly moms and dads). Then they took a field trip to the bank to repay their loan.

"We had elected a president and a vice-president of our company," Hollifield reported. "They told the loan officer that since they had paid off the note a few days early, they didn't think they should have to pay all the interest." He rebated six cents. Then—although cautioning students that bank officers wouldn't usually do such a thing—he donated the full amount they had repaid to the class.

In all, the project took three months. It gave students a taste of the real challenges faced by farmers every day. It helped them understand how our economic system works. (In fact, Hollifield was named Elementary Economics Teacher of the Year by the Georgia Council on Economics.) Finally, it helped students understand more about science, social studies, math, and reading.



First graders tomato company "officers" negotiated with bank officer for rebate on loan.



Teaching Agriculture Through Children's Literature

One of the reasons for the widespread acceptance of Ag in the Classroom activities is the fact that they help teachers teach the existing curriculum rather than ask them to teach an extra subject. Now a new approach—using children's literature to teach agricultural concepts—offers the prospect of involving many more teachers.

"Especially in the primary grades, teachers are familiar with using children's books in their classrooms. If we can show them how this same approach can incorporate lessons about agriculture, teachers are much more receptive," says Elizabeth Wolanyk, state contact for AITC in New York and one of the strongest proponents of this teaching approach.

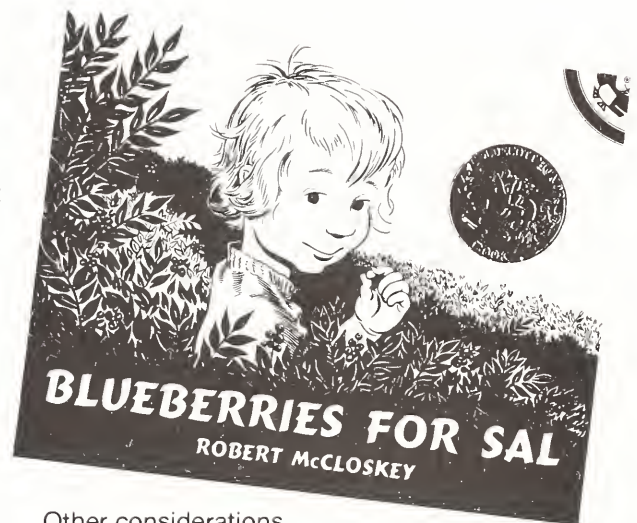


Expanding topics of children's literature exposes the world of agriculture to students.

New York is one of the states that has developed an annotated list of books teachers can use to incorporate lessons about agriculture into their classrooms. The need was presented as teachers began complaining about the kinds of books they found in their local and school libraries. "Very often, the information was outdated or included negative stereotypes,"

Wolanyk says. "We began developing the book list as a service to teachers so we could help them identify the good children's literature that includes accurate information about agriculture."

Books that appear on the New York book list must meet a variety of criteria. Most important, they must accurately reflect agriculture today. For example, Wolanyk had an entomologist review a book on fireflies before it was included on the list.



Other considerations

include stereotypes ("If all farmers are shown wearing bib overalls, that's a problem"), showing a balance of races, and—to the extent possible—showing women in a wide variety of roles.

Once the books are identified, teachers can use them to plan their lessons. But one of the challenges teachers face is the availability of the books. "Children's books don't stay in print very long," says Wolanyk. "If you find a book you like, buy it or get your library to buy it," she advises. New York has purchased a stock of several children's books that they want to make available to teachers.

One of the great advantages in using children's literature to teach agriculture is that teachers feel confident using this approach. "Teachers are not afraid to teach this way because they're already using children's literature in their classrooms," Wolanyk says. "Some teachers may already be familiar with *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. But they might not think to use that to teach the days of the week, the life cycle of the caterpillar, or to teach nutrition. This approach simply broadens the way that teachers are using certain materials."

Copies of New York's book list are available for \$2 to cover postage and handling. Excerpts are listed on page 7.

Nebraska Materials Include Crop Cards, Lesson Plans, and Game

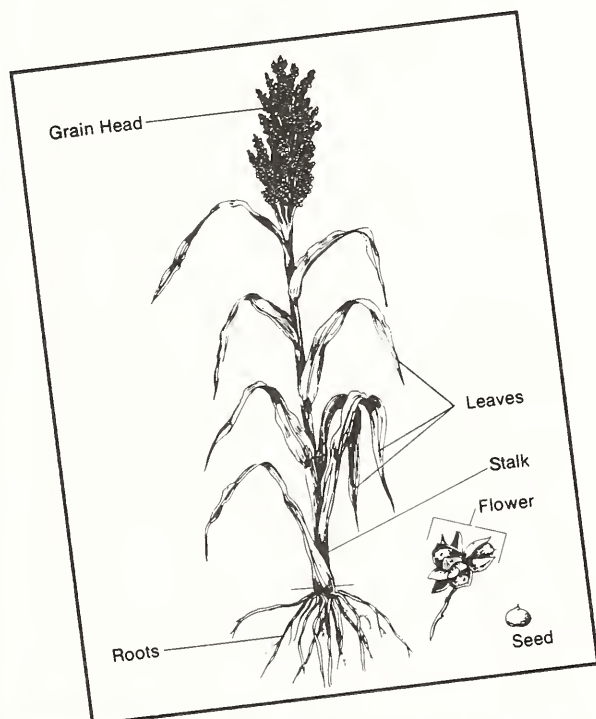
Just as students have unique learning styles, so do teachers have a variety of needs. To meet these varying needs, Nebraska's Ag in the Classroom program has developed new materials that teachers can adapt to their own teaching style and the needs of their students.

The Food Price Game is a board game for students in grades 5 through 8. The game helps students understand some of the economic aspects of American agriculture—while encouraging them to use math, read graphs, and draw conclusions.

The board itself is designed to look like a large dollar symbol. Included with the kit is a poster published by American Farm Bureau, "Who Gets Your Food Dollar? Historic Retail Food Prices and Farm Value." The poster features nine commodities and shows how their retail prices have changed since 1950, as well as the farm value of those commodities.

One player acts as the economist and asks questions. The other players draw cards and must answer questions. For example, one card reads, "If the trend in price remains the same as it did from 1980 to 1990, how much will a can of tomatoes cost in the year 2000?"

"All the information needed to answer the questions appears on the poster," says Ellen Hellerich, state contact for AITC in Nebraska. "This means that every child has a chance to get involved in playing the game."



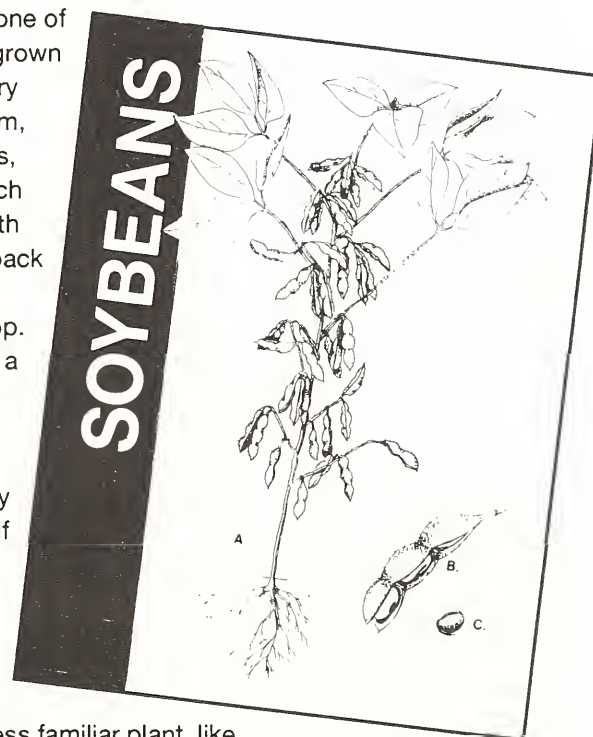
Teachers and students who want to learn more about eight crops grown in Nebraska can take advantage of a new set of crop cards. Each card features one of the most important crops grown in the state: alfalfa, corn, dry edible beans, grain sorghum, oats, soybeans, sugarbeets, and wheat. The front of each card shows the plant in both seed and plant form. The back of the card includes more information about each crop.

"We have also included a drawing of each plant with all the parts of the plant labeled," Hellerich says. "This makes the cards easy to use in science lessons. If the curriculum calls for students to learn about plants, why not use as an example a plant grown near where they live?" Or, teachers might choose a less familiar plant, like grain sorghum, to help students learn about the wide variety of plants grown in this country.

For teachers who want to plan a more extensive lesson around one crop, the program has also developed a series of lesson plans called "So-ya Want to Know About Soybeans." The lessons can be incorporated into language arts, science, math, social studies, and arts classes for all elementary grades.

Activities range from studying folk tales to watching seeds germinate to creating a new soybean character (one example given in the packet might be called the "Teenage Mutant Ninja Soybean"). "We wanted students to have a chance to learn about a single crop in every grade and in every class," Hellerich says.

For order information, contact Ellen Hellerich at 402-421-4400.



Whether it's learning more about grain sorghum or incorporating a lesson on soybeans into a sixth grade math curriculum, Nebraska's new materials can help.

New Kentucky Materials Implement Education Reform

Education reform is a critical issue in most states. In Kentucky, which has implemented one of the nation's most extensive reform efforts, the Ag in the Classroom program has developed materials especially designed to work with the state's new reform curriculum.

Lesson plans and instructional packets for all levels from preschool through grade 12 have now been delivered to each of the state's 1,800 public and nonpublic schools. "Each one of the lessons is built around one of the six learning goals identified by the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA)," says Faye Lowe, state contact for AITC in Kentucky.

"KERA has led to exciting changes in many classrooms," Lowe observes. "It has given good teachers a lot of freedom. It's encouraged their

creativity." The reform act specifies a series of learning goals and learner outcomes.

Schools and teachers are then given considerable latitude in reaching the goals.

"We wanted to be sure that whatever we offered teachers would help them to implement the requirements for education reform," Lowe adds. "At the same time, we wanted to get teachers thinking about how easily agriculture could be incorporated into the curriculum."

In Kentucky, Ag

in the Classroom program activities are provided cooperatively by Kentucky Farm Bureau and the Department of Agriculture. Each organization has assumed different responsibilities for promoting agricultural literacy, according to Lowe. "The Agriculture Department has focused on teacher training. They are training cadres of

Project Links Agriculture, Environmental Studies

A unique effort to tie agricultural education to environmental studies is energizing teachers in Kentucky. The Kentucky Agriculture and Environment in the Classroom (KAEC) is helping students understand the vital role that environmentalism plays in today's agriculture.

KAEC was created to educate Kentucky students about agriculture, its importance to all people, and the necessity of well-maintained natural resources for the production of food. During the past year, the group has conducted teacher workshops throughout the state.

In the workshops, teachers learn how to develop teaching units that use themes that tie subjects together and relate them to everyday life. The first workshop was conducted with funds received from a grant from the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

teachers who can in turn train other teachers in their home schools. Farm Bureau has developed materials and is seeking to train volunteers in every county across the state."

New AITC lesson plans in Kentucky help teachers meet the requirements of the state's new education reform act.

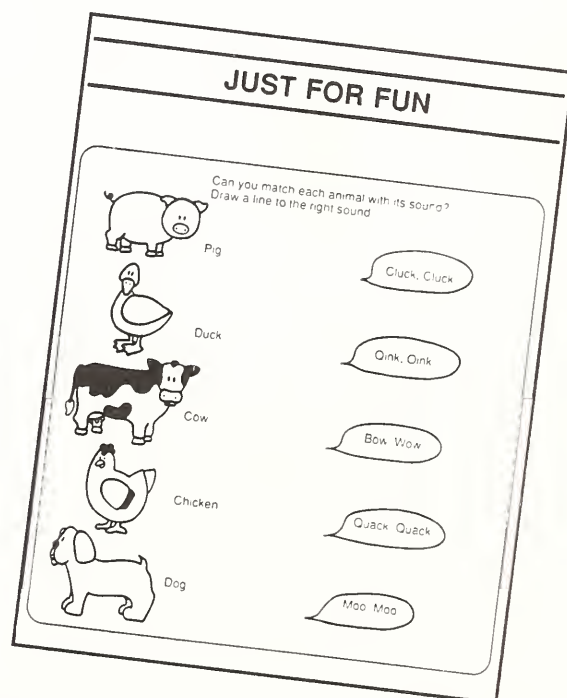
Background

Group activities and discussions about food help students with recognition of common shapes. Utilization of the five senses to learn something new, and development of skills in identifying similarities and differences. At the same time, the preschooler can begin to understand that food comes from a variety of sources and in many forms to provide the nutrition required for good health, growth, and energy requirements.

Procedure

1. Using a flannel board, display the following shapes cut from construction paper: circle, square, rectangle, triangle, oval, oblong, pear. Have students work with a variety of food pictures to match the above shapes with the pictures. e.g. circle (orange, radish, tomato), square (cracker, sandwich, cheese slice), rectangle (cereal box, piece of bacon), triangle (ice cream cone, carrot), oval (egg), oblong (cucumber, watermelon), pear (pear, eggplant). Have them name the shape and the food as they do the matching. Cut silhouettes of commonly eaten foods from dark construction paper. Guess the identity of the food by shape only.
2. Introduce the concept that we enjoy foods through all our senses by the following group activities:
 - Sight**--select examples of familiar foods from all food groups. Have students take turns describing the foods for the group (shape, color, size).
 - Feel**--fix a mystery can by putting a sock top over a coffee can. Place various foods in the can (one at a time) so the students cannot see. Have students try to guess what food is in the can by feeling it.
 - Smell**--ask students to close their eyes and identify mystery smells, using oranges, vanilla chocolate, coffee, onion, bacon, or strawberry.
 - Sound**--have students show that they can distinguish between noisy (crunchy) foods and quiet (non-crunchy) foods by biting into the food, listening, then nodding their heads "yes" or "no" when asked, "Is this food crunchy?" They will also name the foods when asked. Examples: crunchy--celery, potato chips, carrots, apples, non-crunchy--cheese, banana, bread, orange slice.
 - Taste**--have students play a blindfold game. Students taste and try to identify familiar foods while blindfolded and nose is held. Use apples, green peppers, carrots, onions, potatoes. For an expanded lesson, have students identify the four basic tastes: bitter--small pieces of unsweetened chocolate, sour--lemon wedge, salt--pinch for each person, sweet--pinch or cube of sugar.
3. Collect empty containers for fresh (banana peel), frozen, refrigerated, canned, and dried foods. Have children identify the foods and tell where they would store these food containers in their kitchens. Ask children if any have accompanied a parent to a grocery store to purchase any of these foods. Allow individuals to describe their shopping experiences. Help students to understand the changes a food undergoes in different processing or preparation methods. Students red, green, and yellow apples. Cut each open to compare the outside and inside. Taste the difference in fresh apples, applesauce, and apple juice, and discuss how fresh apples are made into applesauce or apple juice.

2



Continued on Page 7

Excerpts from the New York

Kindergarten

Ehlert, Lois. *Growing Vegetable Soup*. New York: Hartcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987.
 Hawes, Judy. *Fireflies in the Night*. New York: Harper Trophy, 1991.
 Henderson, Kathy. *Christmas Trees - A New True Book*. Chicago: Children's Press, 1989.
 Patent, Dorthy Hinshaw. *A Picture Book of Cows*. New York: Holiday House, 1982.

Grade 2

Henderson, Kathy. *I Can Be a Farmer*. Chicago: Children's Press, 1989.
 Krauss, Ruth and Johnson, Crockett. *The Carrot Seed*. Harper & Row.
 McCloskey, Robert. *Blueberries for Sal*. Penguin Books Ltd.

AITC Reading List

Mitgutsh, Ali. *From Cacao Bean to Chocolate*. Carolrhoda Press.

Grade 4

Ancona, George. *Bananas - From Manolo to Margie*. Clarion Books.
 Belleville, Cheryl Walsh. *Round-Up*. Carolrhoda Press.
 Kellogg, Steven. *Johnny Appleseed*. New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1988.
 Knight, James E. *Adventures in Colonial America: The Farm*. Troll Associates.
 Seibert, Diane and Minor, Wendell. *Heartland*. Thomas Y. Crowell.

(The complete book list includes many more titles, as well as suggestions for all grades from kindergarten through grade 6.)

Kentucky Materials, from page 6

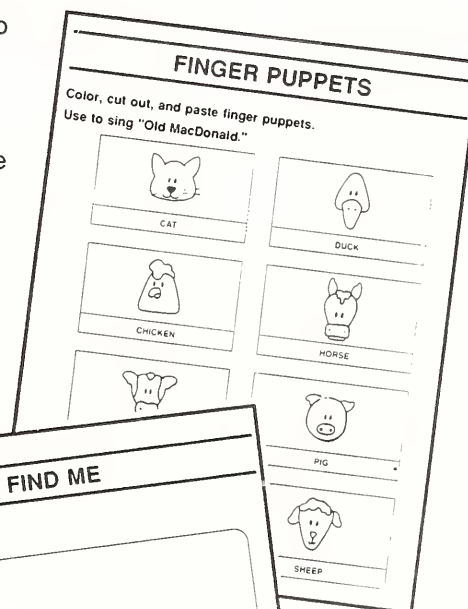
The Kentucky AITC program is now compiling a statewide directory of farmers who are willing to host school tours. At the same time, the program will develop a student activity booklet that will provide follow-up learning activities after a farm tour.

agriculture into their lessons," Lowe says. Teachers throughout the state can contact the state office and take advantage of all these materials.

With grant money

supplemented by

private fund raising, the AITC program is also seeking to establish a statewide lending library of instructional materials, kits, games, farm models, collections of fiction, videos, and other teacher resources. "We hope that soon, teachers in every county in Kentucky will be able to contact us to receive a wealth of materials for integrating



The individuals listed here are key reference persons in each state. If you have any questions, want to make reports, or need more information about your state's Ag in the Classroom program, contact the following:

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